Setting Up a Preservation Workshop

Lisa Sasser

The Tollgate Preservation Workshop illustrates the tremendous benefits that can be realized by using "real world" preservation projects for training in craft skills and preservation philosophy (see preceding article). However, without proper planning, coordination, and logistical support this kind of training can easily become a disaster—scarce project funds wasted, disappointed course participants, and an unfinished project— with the sponsoring agency left to sort out the mess. The key to making it work is to achieve a balance between the requirements of completing a construction project and meeting the needs, interests, and training goals of the workshop participants.

Selecting a Project

To be appropriate for a training workshop a preservation project should meet the following criteria:

- Does the structure have enough significance and integrity for the project to be meaningful preservation work?
- Have goals for treatment of the structure (i.e., stabilization, preservation, restoration, etc.) been clearly identified and approved by the sponsoring agency?
- Can the work be performed without the risk of compromising unique, sensitive, or irreplaceable features? (Remember that training, by definition, requires the performance of work by people that are in the process of acquiring skills.)
- Is the work to be performed on the structure appropriate in variety, complexity, and type to the interests, abilities, and training needs of the course participants?
- Can the work be accomplished in a logical sequence of phases or increments that are appropriate to the training schedule, and can it realistically be completed in the time allotted? (It's hard to proceed with Week 3 of a workshop advertised as "Installing a Wood Shingle Roof" if Week 1—"Building the Foundation Wall" isn't finished.)

Once a project has been identified as a good candidate for a workshop, the necessary documentation (measured drawings, photographs, videos, etc.) and design needs to be completed in time to procure materials well in advance of the beginning of the workshop. Any required approvals, clearances, permits, etc., for the proposed work also need to be obtained as early as possible.

Developing the Training Plan

The treatment program developed for the structure will largely determine the training content of the workshop and the selection of instructors. The course instructor(s) will generally act as project leader(s) and must clearly understand the goals of the project, be able to direct others to accomplish that work, and demonstrate the execution of the craft skills necessary to complete the work. It is extremely helpful for the course instructor to be involved in the definition of project goals and development of a treatment program. If at all possible, the instructor should visit the project site before the project begins, preferably with enough lead time to assist in coordinating the procurement of tools and materials.

Most people who do preservation training are motivated by a genuine passion for seeing historic structures reclaimed and renewed, by the satisfaction that comes from hard work toward a common goal, and by the opportunity to share their skills with others. Unfortunately there is also a handful of "preservation gurus" whose pretensions are exceeded only by their fees. When considering potential instructors, research their completed projects, visit them if possible, and talk to the people who sponsored and attended the courses to see if their expectations were met.

Identify the potential audience and establish the optimum class size. The class size should never exceed the number of people that can work at the project site without getting in each other's way. Ideally there should be no more than 4-6 course participants for each instructor / work leader.

Funding for preservation workshops may come from a number of sources. Agency employee development funds may be available, or conventional project funding may be supplemented by charging tuition. Cooperating associations may be willing to donate materials or services. There are also grant programs such as the National Park Service Cultural Resources Training Initiative which may provide supplemental funding for preservation workshops. Advance planning is critical for identifying potential funding sources and completing grant applications.

Develop a written agreement (contract, task directive, interagency agreement, etc.) containing the following:

- the scope of project work to be completed;
- instructional objectives for the training;
- duties and responsibilities of each party to the agreement (for example, who is responsible for procuring tools and materials, advertising the course, making travel and lodging arrangements, etc.?)
- products (construction documents, instructional materials, record drawings, completion reports, training reports, etc.) and the party responsible for their completion;
- cost estimate and project schedule;
- contingency plans for finishing any project work not completed during the workshop (who is responsible for completing the work and for any additional costs?).

Scheduling the workshop requires consideration of weather and time constraints on workshop participants. The best weather for construction is likely to be the busiest work season for many course participants, and the time when they are least able to attend training.

Course announcements and selection criteria for course participants need to be developed. Who and where are the people that the course is designed for? Will the course be local, regional, or nationally advertised? Are specific skills or backgrounds required? Will the course be open to the public and private sector,

or limited to agency personnel? Rating and ranking factors may need to be developed if the demand is expected to exceed the number of available openings. An agency official responsible for selecting course participants needs to be identified.

Determine how lodging, meals, and transportation will be handled. In some instances the use of agency housing may be a way of keeping course costs down. When working at remote sites it may be necessary to provide temporary housing and/or meals at the job site. Are agency vehicles available to transport course participants to and from the airport, the job site, etc? These issues need to be addressed early in the planning process, since they may represent significant costs and procurement efforts.

A preservation workshop may be advertised in a variety of ways depending on the anticipated audience. The *CRM Directory of Training Opportunities in Cultural Resource Management*, the Association for Preservation Technology *Communique*, National Trust for Historic Preservation publications, agency training announcements and e-mail, state and local newsletters, trade journals, and direct mailing of brochures are all potential ways to publicize the workshop.

Preparing for the Workshop

Allow enough time to insure that all the necessary materials, tools, and equipment can be procured before the workshop begins. Specialized and custom order items may require substantial lead times.

Have materials delivered to the site and stored for retrieval in the approximate order that they will be used.

Complete any necessary preparatory work on the structure whether for safety reasons (underpinning, shoring, scaffolding) or to expedite the work (vegetation removal, pouring footings, selective demolition, etc.)

Assemble and reproduce workbooks, construction drawings, course handouts, etc. Locate slide projectors, VCRs, chalk boards, easels, etc., if needed for classroom sessions.

Arrange for any temporary services and utilities (electricity, phone, water, sanitary facilities, etc.).

Assemble barricades, fencing, flagging tape, safety signs, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and other safety equipment that will be needed during the workshop.

Develop alternative work plans for inclement weather. Is there a shop facility available for inside work?

Assess the need for lockable storage for tools and materials at the project site and arrange for trailers, job boxes, or other secure storage space.

Notify course participants as early as possible that they have been accepted to the course. A package consisting of a course agenda, directions, travel and lodging information should be sent to each person along with a list of any tools and personal protective equipment (steel-toed boots, hard hats, safety glasses, etc.) that they will need to bring. It's very worthwhile to encourage people to bring photographs to compare and discuss structures that they have worked on with conditions similar to the workshop project.

It is always a good idea to have some kind of wayside or interpretive device for the public posted at the entrance to the worksite. Historic photographs, drawings, or other graphic materials, and a brief narrative can be used to inform the public that a historic preservation workshop is in progress. In high visitation areas it may be necessary to post an interpreter and/or schedule guided tours of the project.

Safety

Most preservation work is done by crews who work together on a regular basis, and know each others skills and work habits. Training workshops bring together a group of people of unknown skills and experience, unused to working with each other, doing potentially hazardous work. A safety meeting should be held at the beginning of each course covering the following topics:

- Location of first aid kits;
- Emergency notification procedures;
- Location of hospitals and clinics;
- Group members with first aid or CPR training;
- Group members with medical conditions such as allergic reactions.

It is also very important to designate a "time out" signal to be used at any time by any member of the group who observes an unsafe condition. The "time out" should include a hand sign that can be readily understood if machine noise or distance prevents others from hearing an audible signal. It needs to be stressed that each person is responsible not only for their own safety but also the safety of those around them. Use of appropriate safety procedures and personal protective equipment should always be required.

Some agencies may have special certification requirements for operating certain types of equipment like chainsaws. It may be possible and desirable to arrange for onsite training and certification of course participants.

Putting It All Together

When the group assembles on the first day of the workshop, it is usually the culmination of weeks or months of planning, but it is only the beginning of the real effort — actually getting the project done. Unlike a typical preservation project, this requires working with a diverse group of people, who may never have worked together before, to assess their skills and interests, acquaint them with the work to be done, and provide the instruction needed to allow them to function as a team and complete the project.

Maintenance workers are one of the principal audiences for this type of training. Although many have had only limited exposure to preservation philosophy, they are frequently multi-talented individuals with a wide range of trade skills and problem-solving abilities. Architects, engineers, and cultural resource managers may understand the technical and philosophical issues surrounding the project, but often have little experience in construction and building trades. Both groups can benefit tremendously from interaction with each other. In fact, one of the best features of this type of training is the different skills that each participant brings to the workshop. In almost every group there is at least one

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highly skilled individual that emerges as a natural teacher. At the Tollgate Workshop, Dale Swee, presently a member of the Forest Service Region One Preservation Team, proved to be just such a resource.

There are a number of ways to involve each member of the group in the project work and insure that each person participates in ways that relate directly to their training needs and interests. Probably the most important is to make sure that every member of the group understands the entire process of developing a treatment program for the structure. Before any "hands on" work begins, everyone in the class should be able to answer the following questions:

- What is the history of the structure, and why is it significant?
- How much "integrity" does the structure have? What features and materials define its character?
- What are the management goals for treatment and use of the structure, and how have past uses affected its condition?
- What problems does the structure have and what are their probable causes?
- What are the most important structural characteristics and physical properties of the materials from which the structure is built?
- What are the alternatives for treatment of the structure (stabilization, preservation, restoration, or rehabilitation) and under what circumstances could any or all of them be applied?
- How was the selected treatment plan developed, and how does the design address specific problems with the structure?

One of the advantages to rigorously analyzing and critiquing the planned treatment approach with the group is that it gives everyone an opportunity to identify flaws in the plan, or suggest better ways to accomplish the same end. It also illustrates one of the fundamental principles of preservation — that there is no single "right" way to approach a problem.

It never ceases to amaze me how quickly a group of people in a workshop can fall into a pattern of working smoothly together as a team. There are, however, a few things that an instructor needs to guard against:

Even though the goal is to complete the project, the workshop should never take on the feel of a forced labor camp. Allow plenty of time for questions and discussion, and include some diversions such as field trips.

Make sure that everyone gets a chance to work at different things, and that no one gets stuck doing a single boring or repetitious task. It is especially important to give people an opportunity to learn by doing new things. Encourage course participants with higher level skills to work with people with less experience and help them develop their skills.

On any preservation project unforeseen conditions and unexpected problems occur, inexperienced workers make mistakes, and weather can wreak havoc on the schedule. This should never be an occasion for making excuses or assigning blame. This is, in fact, one of the most important messages of preservation training —that mistakes can be fixed and problems can be solved.

Leave enough time at the end of each work day to make sure that all tools are gathered, cleaned, and properly stored. Pick up any trash or construction debris and properly secure the work site. A little extra time may be needed at the end of the work week to make the site secure for the weekend. At the end of each course gather and inventory all of the tools, making sure they get back to their owners in clean and serviceable condition.

Conclusion

Jim Askins, the founder of the Williamsport Preservation Training Center, always emphasized that preservation is as much about people as it is about buildings. His motto that "the hand teaches the eye" beautifully summarizes the way that hands-on skills training can be the basis for a broad understanding of the goals and methods of historic preservation. When it all comes together on a project, as it did at the Tollgate Shelter, the result is not just a completed preservation project, but a profound feeling of satisfaction for everyone that worked together to make it happen.

Lisa Sasser is a historical architect for the National Park Service. She is currently with the Park Historic Architecture Division, Washington, DC, and previously worked at the NPS

Historic Preservation Philosophy Conference and Workshops, June 20-24, 1994, Portland, OR

Session 1 is designed for Managers; 2 1/2 days, $150.00

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Sponsored by: U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, University of Oregon School of Architecture and Allied Arts, and Oregon State Historic Preservation Office.

Intent of the conference and workshop is to convey the underlying historic preservation philosophy and to assist decisionmakers and practitioners in selecting appropriate treatments to ensure the long-term preservation of historic structures.

Eagle Creek Overlook Rehabilitation Workshop, July 11, 1994 through August 12, 1994, Cascade Locks, OR.

Participants can attend for one or more weeks at a cost to them of $285.00 per week. This workshop will include sessions on condition assessments, modern field rigging, masonry and log restoration, log construction, roofing, blacksmithing, use of epoxies, paint and the conservation of wooden elements. Both workshop series are open to all. {This course is one of 255 listed in the short term training directory [*CRM*, Vol. 16, No. 9, 1993].}

For more information about either workshop contact John Platz, U.S. Forest Service, Region Six Historic Structures Preservation Team, 2955 NW Division Street, Gresham, OR 97030, telephone 503-666-0649.